FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

Volume XXIV, Number 6, December 1973

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Founded by Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)

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OUR PURPOSE: To promote the practice of prayer among all faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

E D I T O R I A L

A LETTER FROM OUR PRAYER-GROUP IN BURLINGTON, N.C., TO A NEW ONE BEING FORMED IN JOHNSON CITY, TENN.

From Maud Oaks to Georga Palmer Dishner

Dear Georga,

All of the Fellowship in Prayer members with whom I am acquainted are on a first-name basis, and I would like to have the same feeling about you. Even if Maud has some not-too-glamorous connotations, it's the name I have, and I hope you will think of me as Maud. I share your feeling of inadequacy as Advisor.

Our group also is small. There are twenty-one members, counting Kathryn and Paul and Elizabeth Hale (a missionary in Malaysia) and three others who do not live in Burlington and so do not meet very often with those of us who do. One of our original members is now confined to her home because of illness, another is hesitant about coming out, and several have work and/or families which prevent regular attendance. So far, all of us except Paul are women. Most of us are white Protestants (I don't know all of the denominations), but two are Roman Catholics and four are Afro-Americans.

The original members are from those who responded to an invitation to an open meeting with Paul and Kathryn when they came to Burlington in the fall of 1971. After having had a wonderful experience with them, some of us felt that we were led to form a local fellowship, which became the nucleus of our present

group. The only requirement for membership is that the person herself feel led by the Holy Spirit to become a part of this group in which each individual is accepted just as she is, and in which a feeling of oneness is cultivated through emphasis on our common faith, our desire to learn and grow, and our hope that by sharing with others through intercessory prayer we may be a part of an even wider fellowship.

Emily Councilman, who with her husband Bob is now a Trustee of F.I.P., has been a moving force and guiding hand in our group. She and two or three others talked, prayed, planned, and replanned, trying to discover the will of the Holy Spirit. During this time, we moved all the way from thinking that we must meet once a week with regular attendance to our final decision to have a fellowship of pray-ers committed to learning through personal study, with monthly meetings for those who find it possible to come. Emily has graciously invited us to make her home our meeting-place.

We have tried various times of meeting, but the most convenient for us seems to be from 5:30 to 7:30 P.M. We do not have a rigid format, but during this year we have been led to evolve a kind of loose plan which is always subject to change through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We have tried to avoid the feeling of depending on one human leader and so have volunteered in pairs as co-moderators of two successive meetings. One of the pair leads a discussion of the book assignment (made at the previous meeting), and the other guides our other sharings and prayer-time. These roles are reversed at the next meeting. We use at least two meetings on each book assignment, which allows for a variety of approach. Although we come from quite varied backgrounds and none of us knew previously all of the other members, we have come to feel a wonderfully warm closeness and trust which makes it natural for us to share our inmost thoughts and even confessions.

In various ways we stay in touch with those who cannot attend in person and with each other between monthly meetings. Saturday lunch together at a local cafeteria has come to be a rewarding experience for those who can make it. Co-moderators

(Continued on page 35)

LOVE-NOTE WRITTEN IN 1973

Carla Patsuris

In the holy honey-colored land
In Jerusalem's greening month of Israel—
Month of journey:
Aromatic pink-beige mountains
Aromatic beige-pink deserts
And the Sea

The Sea of Galilee
with winds and waves converging, splashing
Flesh of fishermen,
Their faith fainting as before;
No end to perpetuity
No other Galilee than one

Then, wind-blown clouds curling white,
Blue docile skies, a rainbow
And—shimmering like liquid topaz—
Fishermen's nets vividly alive
And over all this gentle Kingdom
Togetherness of love

Oh, ultimate consensus of then and now
Holding part of me impaled
Listening ever
For the same same gladdening
Psalms, psalms, psalms of Galilee
And immortality!

God is present by Love alone. By Love alone He is great and glorious. By Love alone He liveth and feeleth in other persons. By Love alone He enjoyeth all creatures, by Love alone He is pleasing to Himself, by Love alone He is rich and blessed.—*Traherne*

THE CHRISTMAS COMET

Rafael de las Casas

It is a vision of the wind
A golden finger print
Nudging the white
hillocks as if
oceans could
harvest
its descending tail
and burn
in perpetual
day —
But. .
Can I truly see the heavens
or only squint
through some wintry
sky, from
one of earth's
silv'ry boudoirs

where many
breathless things
are
recording the audible
stillness
of its
beauty.

Silence promotes the presence of God, prevents many harsh and proud words, and suppresses many dangers in the way of ridiculing or harshly judging our neighbor. . . If you are faithful in keeping silence when it is not necessary to speak, God will preserve you from evil when it is right for you to talk. —Fenelon

THE GIFT THAT IS ALWAYS NEW

Catherine Cabeen Houck

IN response to a phone-call a workman came to give an estimate on repairs to our sidewalk. Having had experience of the long waiting that some contractors put one through before they will come to do a small job, I asked the workman if he thought he could finish it in a month's time. He was amazed and looked at me as if I were joking. I became even more doubtful of getting the repairs done all summer, until he laughed and said, "Lady, if I ever get too busy to do the small jobs, I'm afraid the good Lord will not send me the big ones."

A delightful conversation followed during which I learned much about the meaning of commitment when a person reaches adulthood before uniting with any faith. Most of us find ourselves in the same church that we were born into, parents, grandparents, or even more remote ancestors having made the choice earlier. We accept the traditions, the ceremonies, and the customs with little questioning and almost no study.

But the adult convert is looking for a new way of life, a new purpose, and the first hearing of the word of God. To him it is a revelation, he believes the teachings, he quotes the passages which have special meaning for him, and he spreads his enthusiasm throughout his hours. The edifice itself means little to him, the organ, the choir, the stained-glass windows are non-essentials. He glories in a new-found well-being. For him it is again the first century. He is absorbed in the good news and becomes another example of "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." His family sees a change in him as he begins to share his time and joys with them. He not only finds a spiritual life he never knew before but also a strangely happy companionship. Picnics, swimming and skating parties take on a new meaning as they are shared with family and friends. He is proud of his labor, considerate of his employers, and worthy of his hire.

When the workman and I had made our agreement and set a time for the work to be done, I found I had a new outlook on

the importance of little jobs whether they were mine or someone else's. I also found that this little encounter had made me wonder about my own complacency.

Oh, go take up your work and do it. Do it with cheerfulness and love. So shall you shine with a glory which is all your own—a glory which the great heaven of universal life would be the poorer for missing. —Phillips Brooks

APPALACHIAN CAROL

Bettie M. Sellers

If the Christ Child should come to our mountains,
his birth angel-told in these vales,
I would thatch his stable with pine boughs
garnered by steep winding trails.

I would perfume his cradle with cedar
and leaves from the sassafras tall;
I would gather Him wild ripe persimmons
and a chinquapin brown for a ball.

From the bee-tree, I'd ladle Him honey,
far sweeter than manna of old;
I would weave Him the softest rare garments
to protect His small limbs from the cold.

And then, when I'd finished my working,
I'd call for the squirrel and the deer
to join me in loving devotion,
on our knees we would welcome Him here.

THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT

A Story by Eleanor Ebersole

ONCE there was a boy who captured something. But he didn't know that. He was always catching fireflies and frogs, but he let them go. The something he caught he could not let go because he didn't know that he had it.

The boy, when he was grown, went on expeditions. He trapped wild bear and porpoises, and let them go safely. He trapped butterflies in a net to study them and let them fly again. But he didn't know that he had captured something else.

One day people began asking him not about his bears or butterflies which had become very famous because he photographed them, but about himself. Did he know that he had caught something else of the world while he had been catching and freeing the wild and the tame?

"Me?" he replied. "Have I caught anything but what I have shown you?"

"Oh, yes" was the answer. "The truth. The spirit. You must let it go so that we may have it."

"I!" the man said. "I have caught these things?"

"Oh, yes. You have them and have taught us. Now you must give them back. Set them free for us."

"But how?" he asked.

"You will find a way. We will wait," his interrogators said.

Time went by. A child came. His child, but not only his.

"Give me the garden," the child said. "The world garden where you wander and love."

"That I can do," the man said. And he gave to the child all the truth of his spirit of which there was more than enough.

It is permissible to pray for whatever it is permissible to desire.
—Thomas Aquinas

A CHILD CAN SEE

Eleanor B. Mathews

In early years, before the night sky
was clouded with sin,
The child saw clearly, not a vision,
but a clear, benign face.
It was lighted, strangely, with a brightness,
a ring of light;
And before the child became old and his eyes
dazzled by self-reflection
The image was always there, a face not troubled,
but serene, wearing his thorns like laurel.

SOUTH AFRICAN CHRISTMAS

Susan Shields

Bright blue peace!
Beam brilliant blossoms,
Streaming stillness and the quiet shade of palms.
Glorious glowing joy,
Laughing mirth of birds,
Silent sunlight and the purple mountains warmed.

Christ is born!
Praise the Lord,
When the ripened plums have burst.
Jacarandas bow before Him,
See them carpeting the earth.

Bright blue peace!
Beam brilliant blossoms,
Streaming stillness and the quiet shade of palms.
Glorious glowing joy,
Laughing mirth of birds,
Silent sunlight and the purple mountains warmed.

LOOK UP — FOR STRENGTH

Estelle D. Broadrick

EVEN the weak, the timid, the sheltered, the protected and the shrinking have a wonderful faculty to adjust to circumstance and environment. Some of the tenderhearted and strong will try to protect the weak and take over their burdens. It is wrong for the strong to do this, and it is a sin against the weak. It is robbing them of the chance to grow, to be real and worthwhile....

Some experiences may crush and annihilate, but they may be necessary and of lasting worth in our lives. Trials and tribulations may be the road to God. He is very near to those who have broken hearts. He gives hope, courage, and endurance, and the chance of growing into wisdom.

Hardships and heartaches often turn human potential into productivity. Those who are lazy, weak, clinging, poor, or improvident can grow only in God.

If they are encouraged to depend on brother, sister, parent, or friends, they may never look beyond mortals for help and may never find God. They don't learn how to face life realistically. The illnesses they take refuge in are an enchantment, an escape.

Only by depending on God may they grow strong and fill a predestined niche.

By the power of prayer, by the power of faith, we can "hopeth all things, endureth all things." We can develop a colossal force of inward concentration to bring to our problems. We can develop a serene impartiality through prayer which will prevail against trouble in any form.

Faith and prayer can lead us out of the dark valley, out of hardships, out of sorrow. The light of understanding may flicker at times, but we must dispel all doubts and fears and grow in faith. Slowly and tentatively the light of understanding will grow and doubts and fears will deteriorate. Just as turning on a light in a dark room will make the darkness disappear, so will faith banish fear and tension. Only by trying to perfect our faith, day by day, can we keep our balance in these days of many troubles.

STAR-SHINE

Alice Mackenzie Swaim

Christmas is love, and the chance to show it,
Christmas is joy, and the grace to know it;
Christmas is memory, hope and desire,
Loving hearts at peace round a glowing fire.

Christmas is star-shine in every man's sky,
Laughter and wonder in every child's eye,
Shepherds and angels caroling clear,
Heaven brought down for a moment each year.

GOD'S GIFT

Ellen Martin

A simple gift, no fancy wrap,
No ribbon green or red,
God's gift to all the world
Lay in a manger bed.

No fancy ribbon helped to tie
The gift sent from above.
A newborn babe in swaddling clothes
Lay bound in cords of love.

There was no blossoming tree on which
His precious gift was tied,
But on a cross in Calvary
He hung until He died.

With Faith and Hope God lifted Christ
From out that stony grave.
For each of us—forevermore
The gift of Life—He gave.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Mildred Long

PRAYER is the outreach of the soul to God; the secret yearning after that which satisfies its need.

Someone has said, "Prayer is opening the top windows of the soul toward Heaven." Another has said prayer is a light. The candle burning on the altar is a symbol of prayer. But true prayer is a light within rather than a form without.

Prayer is as varied as the needs that inspire it; as the individuals that practice it; as the circumstances that suggest or promote it.

Prayer is as natural as breathing; as natural as it is for the bird to sing, for the leaf to fall, for the flower to turn its face toward the sun.

Prayer may be a simple desire, or it may be an agonized cry. It may be a glad acceptance or a paean of praise. It has many forms and many voices.

But prayer also has its laws—that is, effectual prayer. Many prayers go unanswered because the laws are ignored or disobeyed. Once it seemed incredible that an airplane could be built that would actually fly. Now it is taken for granted. But the production of the airplane was dependent on knowing and obeying certain laws of nature and science. So it is good for us to know some of these spiritual laws regarding prayer.

First, there must be a desire in the heart—a desire to know God and find Him to be a reality for us and in us. Jeremiah of old knew this, for he said, speaking for God, "Ye shall seek me and ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jesus also stressed this: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled."

All those who have traveled this road know that this desire must be very strong. It needs real vitality to overcome the cross currents, the undertow, the human inertia, and all the oth-

er obstacles to attaining fellowship with God. For the goal of prayer is not to get some things from God but to allow Him to enter into us to transform us. Only those who truly seek with with all their hearts will find.

The second law to be observed is the law of quietness. We remember the prophet Elijah went into the mountains to commune with God. There God came to him, not in the wind or the fire or the earthquake, but in "a still small voice." The prophet Isaiah said, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." God speaking through David admonished us: "Be still and know that I am God." A modern writer says that in the spiritual realm "our cargoes come to us over quiet seas."

The noisy, confused mind cannot touch God or feel His presence or hear Him speak. It is when we get still and listen that we hear. When we silence the fluctuation of mental activity and concentrate on one pure thought about God, we may begin to feel His presence. When the surface of the mind becomes still, as unruffled as a crater lake in early morning, we may then hope to reflect His face.

The turmoil within us shuts Him out. Concentration on problems, troubles, personal hurts, or grief, leaves no room for His divine presence. Where worry corrodes, He is absent. Where anger upsurges, He has departed. But where love for Him, adoration and praise reside, He is there. If we are to meet Him, it must be on His terms. Peace and quietness furnish the climate for His presence. It is necessary to learn to be still, if we are to see Him.

The third law I would mention is surrender. If we have learned to get quiet in our hearts and minds, we have already made a partial surrender. We have for the time being laid aside our turmoil and materialistic thinking. This is a good beginning, but only a beginning. This can be done repeatedly and still leave great areas of self-centeredness untouched. Deep down within us all, in the subconscious mind, there live hurts, resentments, fears, and guilts that need to be cleansed. These negative feelings cling to our unsurrendered ego. When we have really turned ourselves over to God, and given Him the keys to every room in our hearts, we will not desire to harbor such feelings.

Surrender means the outpouring of self, the giving of self, that is exemplified in the branch and the vine. The life of the vine flows through the branch and fills it. The branch does nothing of itself. Separated from the vine, it dies. Its life is not its own, but the life of the vine. The fruit it produces does not belong to the branch but to the vine. Surrender brings us into such a relationship with God,—a total emptying of self, a total infilling of His spirit and His presence. This kind of surrender is required if we are to know God and be empowered to do His will.

Then I would say the practice of prayer should be a part of life's schedule. No musician becomes proficient without daily practice. The athlete must exercise his muscles daily. The spiritual musician or athlete must engage in the spiritual discipline of prayer every day. At the same time, in the same place, set aside a period with the unwavering purpose to know God and commune with Him—this will lead to a transformed life.

But we will not stop here. Brother Lawrence, an obscure monk of the fifteenth century, is known today not because of his intellect or outstanding deeds but merely because he learned to "practice the presence of God." Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing." Thomas Kelly says: "A practicing Christian is is one who practices the perpetual return of the soul to the inner sanctuary." Once begun, we shall find this fellowship so sweet we shall desire it all the time. Thus we shall move toward making God so real to us that in the flash of a thought we are in His presence. Or we shall feel that He is in the background of all our thinking like the backdrop on a stage.

There is still another requisite for answered prayer. That is faith. In Hebrews, it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Also James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally....but let him ask in faith nothing doubting, for he that doubteth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord."

Perhaps we need to define faith, to express its meaning in simpler terms. We live by faith more than we realize. We put

our trust in the pilot of the airplane though we never see him. We trust our parents, our bankers, our public servants, our friends. Why do we not trust God? Why do we not become as the sheep are and trust our Loving Shepherd to care for us?

Faith in God is based on love for Him and trusting obedience. If we are in Christ, then faith is in us. For "He is the author and finisher of our faith." When our human faith is weak, we can still trust His perfect faith to work for us.

Faith can come only to the receptive heart. Therefore we must remove barriers. What barriers? Well, for instance, undue self-effort, or any resistance to life or the circumstances we find ourselves in. The branch does not struggle to remain on the vine. It just lets go. Anything that prevents our relaxing and trusting is a barrier. One doctor I know used to say he measures the faith of a person by his ability to relax. Our only effort lies in the way of *willing* to will the will of God.

Faith is perfect trust in a loving heavenly Father. If we love enough, we will also trust. We will relinquish all things to His will and provision.

At this point faith becomes an inner activity, a climate in which we live—and this is faith in reality.

Jesus was in the boat with His disciples when the storm came. He was asleep on a pillow, undisturbed by winds and high waves. There was nothing in His inner consciousness to respond to fear or turmoil. For the disciples' sake, He arose and spoke to the elements, and said, "Why are ye so fearful? Where is your faith?"

Real faith is Jesus' kind of relaxed knowing, an inner assurance, trusting God and life. Like the trust of a child who laughs or cries at events but picks himself up again and goes on forgetting. Or the lamb that rests in the Shepherd's arms in confidence.

There is still another aspect of prayer we must mention, and that is praise. It has been said that all our prayers should culminate in praise. A certain current writer has produced four books on this theme: that to praise God, not only in all circumstances but *for* all things, is to work miracles. And he recounts

these miracles he himself has seen.

This is the high point, the pinnacle of prayer: the joyous life, the undefeatable spirit that knows itself to be in Christ and therefore safe and confident in His loving care.

Jesus said He told His disciples these things (contained in Chapters 14 to 16 of John) that His joy might be in them, and that their joy might be full. He didn't promise them *all* joy in the world. He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And we who live in Christ can have the victory of joy.

After night comes day. After the storm, sunlight again. After sorrow, joy. After tribulation, victory and peace. It is a law of life. The only requisite is that we learn to turn our attention and thoughts away from grief or trouble or perplexity and look steadfastly into the face of Christ, that His joy and His spirit of overcoming may be implanted firmly in our hearts.

A saintly lady in England, noting that the British flag flies over the residence of the King, said, "Joy is the flag flying over the castle of my soul to show that the King is in residence."

MY HOLLY TREE

Georga Palmer Dishner

As I plant you, my holly tree,
I know I shall not live to see
You lift your arms to God
From your roots firmly in the sod;
Nor shall I thrill at the sight....
Green leaves...berries so red and bright,
Nor hear birds twitter and sing,
As on your green branches they swing
To feast on your juicy fruit;
But I shall plant soundly your root
And pray you will do your part
Someday...to soothe a weary-worn heart.

A

HOLIDAY

SELECTION

OF POEMS

by Marion J. Richardson

IN DARKNESS

To live in darkness —-
unable to distinguish
the red rose from the pink one,
may enhance the imagination
and enable one to look at roses
through films of color.

To enjoy the twilight
with the knowledge
that it is half-light,
provides the courage needed
to watch sunrises
in darkness.

The hunger for light
bears a heavy cross,
but faith warms the heart
and raindrops
sing a lullaby
over the precipices.

A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS DREAM

She slept with her prayers
and Christmas excitement.
In the early dawn, she awoke
to find the doll in her dream
by her side. . .
her dream was real.

SILENT NIGHT

It matters not what my religion,
thoughts I have, or words I preach. . .
hear the carolers, the midnight bells —
the awesome stillness
in the soft, falling snow.

TENSIONS RELEASED

In these flowery hills,
I breathe the fragrance
of God's flowers —
a butterfly touches
my finger
and I admire
the fragile, mosaic-like wings
resembling a window
in one of God's houses.
Listening to an inner voice,
my body releases all tensions —
any frustrations take flight,
and I feel free
as the butterfly
impregnated
with God's love.

ECHOES OF THE PAST

Silent
the ivory and ebony
that once played
Christmas carols
and joyous voices
that sang in harmony.
Now, only echoes
vibrate softly
around the empty house.
Winds find their way
through loose windowpanes
to touch the keys
in spirit,
echoing the past.

ENCHANTMENT

The sound
of Christmas carols —
enchantment
from paradise,
echoes through
the falling snow.
Sparkling lights
on Christmas trees
emulate stars
in the heavens.
Lights out —
darkness weaves
this euphoria
into my dreams.

DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST

THE following epistle is said to have been taken by Napoleon from the records of Rome when he deprived that city of so many valuable manuscripts. It was written by Publius Lentulus, Governor of Judea, to the senate of Rome, at the time when and on the spot where Jesus commenced his ministry. It was the custom in those days for a governor to write home about events that transpired while he held office.

"Conscript Fathers: In these our days appeared a man named Jesus Christ, who is yet living among us, and of the Gentiles is accepted as a prophet of great truth; but his own disciples call him the son of God. He hath raised the dead and cured all manner of diseases. He is a man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a ruddy countenance, such as the beholder may both love and fear. His hair is the color of a filbert when fully ripe, plain to his ear, whence downward it is more of orient color, curling and waving on his shoulders; in the middle of his head is a seam of long hair, after the manner of the Nazarites. His forehead is plain and delicate; the face without spot or wrinkle, beautiful with a comely red; his nose and mouth are exactly formed; his beard is the color of his hair and thick, not of any length, but forked.

In reproving he is terrible; admonishing, courteous; in speaking, very modest and wise; in proportion of body, well-shaped. None have seen him laugh, many have seen him weep. A man for his surpassing beauty excelling the children of men."

(Contributed by Martha Fowler Reichle)

HOW JESUS PRAYED

Réuben L. Musey

NO ONE else has inspired so many people with the simple grandeur of His prayers than Jesus Christ. No one has ever succeeded in bringing man so close to the majesty and holiness of God in

(Continued on page 33)

THREE POEMS

by Rose Noller

1/ COSMIC TRAILS

We are travelers of the sky, —
we, an earth-point in vast space.
We are made of star-dust, —race
to find our Pegasus and fly!

Greet the sun Capella, rising,
drink from the deep Aquarian cup,
reversely ride, astronomizing
from the "square," then right-side-up

at Polaris, we get our bearings,
touch Columba, the Hare and Dove,
warning Draco's snorts and snarings
while the GREAT AURORAS move!

From the zenith, majestically,
the green-glow streamers radiate:
We the earth-man, you and me,
we are part of this estate!

How wonderful to wander streets
and in the lanes of heavenly highways! —
to cure us of our scheme-defeats,
finding Dippers on starry skyways!

These star-relations are our kin,
Andromeda, with a million suns, —
this estate to wander in, —
we, too, are *these*, we earthly ones.

2/ FIRE AND FROST

(Inspired by a winter view of Niagara Falls)

The Falls had touched the forest into frost,
The frost to flame, at bannered close of day,
Where all the cries of those who were thought lost
Have witnessed glorious union from earth's fray. . . .
They that have garnered priceless memories,
Forget the pain of conflict and sheer ice,
Forget in hills of crystal forest trees
How tears of mist in meeting, sacrifice
In joy, to filigree of frost and fire!
A million wings have heralded this end,
This blaze upon a crystal funeral pyre,
Where frost extremities with flaming bend,—
Merge flame in stellate crystal — ice-embossed —
Frost that is fire, and fire's unburning frost!

3/ DIVINITY INVOLVED

The Greek superlatives are not enough;
We see but corners, only, of His Grace;
Is God a stone, when all of life is rough?
No Astronaut remarked they saw His Face!...
We count upon uncertainty and change;
The Rock of Ages, cobwebbed in a stream;
How does He look, involved, renewed and strange?
Within our midst concerned, not in a dream?
We are His hands and feet, rebuilding loss
Of terrored flood, no thing escapes His eye,
We are His hands and feet, though rapids toss;
He is involved and working, standing by:
Involved in Nature, all its happenings,
Close omnipresence, plus *spade* and *wings*!

THREE CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Zelma S. Dennis

Today I bring these gifts for you,
A loaf of bread
Baked from the sun-drenched seed
Sustaining every mortal need.
And here upon this page in lyric script
A singing, tender hope to lift
Your heart from human suffering.
But most of all, dear one, I bring
The gift of love,
To heal your soul from wounds that scar.
Three Christmas gifts
The bread, the word, immortal love...
Born from that mystic star
That shone one winter night above.

"JOY COMETH"

Jean Moore Smith

Beyond blue mountains and green pines
A pale-pink winter sunset shows.
Icicles hang from roadside rocks;
But spring is on the way, one knows.
The gay brook cascades down its bed.
So wintry hearts won't last always.
After weeping, we're promised joy.
Hearts, too, shall have their springtime days.

COME WITH ME TO BETHLEHEM

Minnie Bauer

NOW it is December first and time to get ready to go to Bethlehem again. I have made these journeys in my mind and spirit many Christmas seasons in the old traditional way. My Bethlehem is the Christmas scene I create on my buffet, a spare two by five feet. First, I go to the attic and get my box of treasured figures, articles, things to be used in the panorama of events. They are carefully kept from season to season.

Construction is begun— a little at a time day by day and always with prayer and song. First, there is a row of tall "pines" placed across the back of the scene. These are not old but made each year of the first harvested milo heads, a true symbol of a renewal of faith. Then the rustic stable to the center back with open door, two windows, and the empty manger. A little white dove is perched on a rafter awaiting some event. Other pine trees and shrubs appear all over the scene. A little lake to the left front is surrounded by low shrubs. Two special fir trees flank the ends of the stable and I seem to hear "O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree" and I hum along.

It looks a little lonely, but then the shepherd and the shepherd boy take the flock of sheep and some cows out to the meadow on the right front. All is guarded well by a couple of large sheep dogs. Wild animals appear here and there among the trees. Several deer stand silent and alert in expectancy of something also. Again I hear "O Little Town of Bethlehem" —a familiar strain.

Soon a bright star appears above the scene at the top of the blue backdrop with its fleecy clouds and beautiful sky. Then, next day, off to the far left I see the three wise men approaching on their long journey, watching and guided by the star. They are bringing gifts of love and their song is "We Three Kings of Orient Are."

Later, the day of days comes, more angels appear, and "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" wafts out into the air. Then Mary and Joseph are making their way to the stable. They enter

and are grateful for the simple shelter. Here, the Christ Child is born, and laid in the manger, the angel chorus proclaiming "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing, Glory to the New-born King."

The animals and the sheep and the shepherds move in toward the stable, and they listen to "Silent Night, Holy Night." A little collie dog sits in mute adoration by the manger. The donkey lies down by the door to rest after his long journey, and an old cow moves in back of the manger to keep it from harm. The wise men have arrived by now, bringing their gifts for the baby Jesus, and the angels and all kneel around in profound adoration.

Silence prevails with a great prophecy fulfilled with redeeming grace and hope for all mankind. Then a chorus sings out: "O Holy Night, O Night Divine!"

So come with me to Bethlehem and we shall sing "O Come, let us adore Him, O Come, let us adore Him, O Come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord." Amen.

WINGS OF LIGHT

Marjorie Schecher

Protected is he who walks among the
angels, embraced in their wings
like an unborn child, shielded
against those who love the "egotistical
self."

Blood turns cold for lack of the
conscious "I".

Inexpressible be the soul's delight
for him who is embraced by the wings
of light.

NEW YEAR'S RETURNING FAITH

Alice Richmond

When the brain foolishly whispers,
thoughts of doubtful gnawing hardened age
Concerning prayer as questioned cant,
concerning the why's and wherefore's
About a holy book called sacred:
today I query in torment's fearful grasp.

What can the heart do to untangle
such fantasies of moderne blurring quest
Sadly memoried treasures' call destroy,
if let go rampant, undisciplined?

Heart, pick up my childhood golden dreams,
resurrect glad-rooted love for Christ
Remember pure belief when I was young
Where Mother knelt my pillowed softness held
As with shining eyes, His Truth she shared
with me His precious birth in Bethlehem.

This new year with deep memories awakened
must return my tender childhood knowing Song
Revive my youthful rooted thoughts:
those years I knew that God was Love.

Christ, my questing dreams encouraged
godly gleams His Mercy known eternal —
While here with new-old meaning viewed
in fellowshipped Creation rises:
Births for me a prayered New York glorious heard
and I become His child again reborn!

TWO POEMS WRITTEN 71 YEARS APART

Louise Kidder Sparrow

A Book And A Skull *(Circa 1902)*

A book and a skull and what's the use?
If from labor and thought no good befall?
We may strive in vain, for after all
We die; and what's the use?

A book and a skull and what's the use?
We may search for truth without avail,
For though we try we must ever fail;
We die; and what's the use?

A book and a skull and what's the use?
We love the task we undertake,
We love our work for work's own sake,
We live! and *that's* the use!

A book and a skull and what's the use?
Someone may profit by our thought—
We have gained at last a goal we sought,
We have lived! and *that's the use!*

Thoughts As We Approach Transition *(1973)*

Like the sound of ocean breathing in the sea-shell,
Like the fading of the daylight on the hill,
Like the moaning of the wind among the rafters
Life-blood moves — a slowly downward flowing rill.

Content to know the long earth road at last is ending
Distressful clamors of the world will soon be done;
Even joys, or griefs of mournful separations,
Will wound no longer when our seven-league course is run.

Soon will friendly death fulfill our deepest longings,
Thus our dearest ones are gently weaned away,
Knowing that our passing will be that much sweeter
If they cease to strive to hold or bid us stay.

Days still fair become a weary-heavy burden,
When the dauntless spirit droops and helpless lies,
Yet our work will somewhere come to full fruition
For Lo! Though seeming dead, the live soul never dies!

What we failed to do on earth is not forsaken,
From some other sphere
We shall find our beatings — wiser methods taken —
To right wrongs here.

Happiness and joys we knew in this world will strengthen
Our joys Over There;
Serene, we put our trust, as shadows lengthen,
In God's unfailing care.

PEW IN THE PINES

Eleanore-Melissa

The sun
Extends a path
Of dancing motes
Through evergreen trees,
And brings me,
Trembling,
To my knees,
Whispering thankful prayer
That the Light of God
Is everywhere.

GUIDING STARS

Nina Willis Walter

O stars, They tell me you are very old,
Older than any story, I've been told.
You watched the stable where Our Lord was born.
You lighted the brown hills, from night to morn,
Where shepherds kept their sheep. And on their way
You guided wise men on that holy day,
The day the baby Jesus came to earth,
While one of you glowed brighter for his birth.
O stars, how glad I am for your clear light
That guides the travelers through the darkest night.

MY GIFT

Catherine Cabeen Houck

How shall I love Thee,
Child newly-arrived,
By bringing my gifts
To lay at your side?
Or shall I go seek
The shepherd and lamb
And let them now share
The place where I am?
Search for the stranger,
Move my place further,
Say, "Little Lord Jesus,
Here is my brother"?

WHENCE COMETH WISDOM

Edna Dillon

THE OLD wornout rusty swing in the abandoned schoolyard creaked as the pretty woman leaned against the pole listening for something in the silence. She eased her lithe body into the iron seat and pulled the collar of her expensive sweater up around her neck.

Kicking the ground with a polished loafer made the rusty iron joints groan as she forced the swing into a swaying motion, But she was not thinking so much of the schoolhouse as of the solid old frame house, just back of it, where she had lived as a child.

She remembered the garden with its rows of vegetables and border of flowers, and felt the presence of her smiling, fair-haired mother with her apron full of vegetables. She could see her in the kitchen, canning, cooking, cleaning, doing the family sewing. Yet her mother had never been too busy to answer her questions or tell her a story.

She remembered, too, the short intervals when her mother had been called away to tend to sick folks, how lonely it had been then. The very air had yearned for her return. The meals had been tasteless, the house unkept, and the clothes half ironed. Then what a rejoicing when the wagon was seen coming up the road bringing her home again.

The woman in the swing moved restlessly and cocked her head as if listening for those once-joyful sounds. She was asking herself why—why she had left her well-organized home this morning and driven all these miles to look at the home of her childhood. There was nothing here, really.

She knew that her well-staffed household would not miss her. She had given the orders for the day, and they would be carried out, and no one would know whether she was there or not. Tears came to her eyes as she thought how very seldom, if ever, she did things for her family—things like those her mother had done for her. What had she done for Joe, her husband, or Joeleen, her teenaged daughter? All the manual labor of the household was taken care of by the help.

She threw back her head and let the tears run down her cheeks. Had prosperity robbed her of being a real woman? Was she as necessary to Joe or Joeleen as her mother had been to her?

The half-worded question brought more pictures out of the past. It was graduation time. That had been during the "flapper" years, and she had wanted to wear a tight red lacey dress low in the nevk, sleeveless, and short at the bottom. But somehow her mother had found the pattern of a drrss just like the one the president's niece had worn at her graduation. It was made of Swiss organdy, and she remembered floating like a fairy in it during the ceremony. That was the night Joe had asked her for a date. When she mentioned to her mothe fthat she owed it all to the dress, her mother had laughed and said, "God bless the president's niece!"

Why, she had used this same strategy on Joeleen, who was graduating from high school in a few days. A low laugh caught in her throat. Joeleen had had her heart set on a sleazy brief outfit you could scarcely call a dress. What about her secret talk with the lady at the dress-shop? It had worked well. Joeleen had been sent to the store to pick up a package, and the saleslady had done the rest. She had bought Joeleen the most perfect blue gown that just matched her eyes.

Other memories came—like the times her mother had persuaded her dad to take a day off by making believe her heart was set on a fishing-trip or some other outing. Wasn't that how she was dealing with Joe? She didn't want to go to the coast at all this weekend—secretly she hated the ocean—but Joe needed to get away, and a few hours on the boast would work wonders.

She wrinkled her brow, trying to catch an old saying of her mother's—it might have come from the Bible—"A good woman has the wisdom of the angels around her head." All at once she felt her burden lifted like a fog under the sun's warm rays. Women were always needed, she as much as her mother, only in different ways.

She thought how warmly the family greeted her when she came home from working as a Graylady at the hospital. Bless them! Freed from her sense of guilt, she threw back her head and laughed out loud, startling up a couple of pheasants from the matted grass. She hurried to her car.

THE RAINBOW

Helen G. Jefferson

God set his bow against a cloud-dark sky
And Noah saw the sign and heard the Voice
That promised He would not again destroy
All flesh by flood. We read this and rejoice.

With Noah we see rainbows as a pledge
Of reconciliation and of peace.
They come with sun in those last sudden showers
Before black skies turn blue and rainbows cease.

God's signature is in the shining bow.
He writes his name in beauty everywhere.
He made the earth and everything that is.
God must be love who made the world so fair.

Would One who loves destroy the world He made?
One who gives rainbows is a God we trust.
If fruitful earth is burned; not God, but man
May turn its green to dead atomic dust.

O, HOLY NIGHT!

Albert Jacobsen

There is in every leaf a power
Endowing it with glorious green,
And in the heart of every flower
Resides God's handiwork unseen.
It dwells in childish innocence,
In kindness that good folks display;

It sparks the joy and reverence
Of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

With gifts and charity and love,
With hymns and carols and good cheer,
We glorify The Star above
And countless Manger Scenes each year.
The Eve of the Messiah's birth,
Our land, ablaze with spectrum-light,
Extols the Prince of Peace on earth,
Good will to men — O, Holy Night!

POEM

Rudolph Ecker

Have you ever read the stories
That are written in the snow
By the birds and little creatures
As they travel to and fro?

You can tell just what they're doing
As they go their merry way
And you'll learn of all their habits
If you watch their prints each day.

Take a hike out through the meadows,
By the streams and through the woods
And the pleasure you will harvest
Is worth more than earthly goods.

In the knowledge that you gather
I am sure that you will see
How the God of all Creation
Has created you and me.

HOW JESUS PRAYED (Continued from page 18)

prayer. And no one has shown so wonderfully the mercy and compassion of the Heavenly Father.

The spirit of intense communion with the Father which marked the prayer life of Jesus was reflected in His great concern and responsibility for His fellowmen. There is no doubt about the intensity of Jesus' communion with God; it was the heart of His life.

With regard to time and place, Jesus' principle of freedom in prayer is seen often in the Gospels. He prayed early in the morning, before dawn, in a lonely place....He prayed all night in the hills....He prayed in the evening in the garden....He prayed during the day in the mountains. He faced his last crisis in the act of prayer.

Jesus can be our guide in prayer. His way of prayer may help us find that freedom of spirit which will enable us to face the crises in our own lives; and His understanding of the nature of prayer may increase our awareness of its power.

Every man needs strength....Every man needs help....Every man needs guidance in his critical decisions. There is no better way to achieve them than in prayer. Let Jesus be our guide.

OMNIPOTENT CHARITY

Mary Ferguson

"Where wert thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"
Almighty Justice asks this thing of man,
When weak-willed humans, presumptuous of their worth,
Bemoaning trials question His eternal plan.

Well knowing his Creator's ever-patient love,
"I was in Your mind, Lord," humbly man replies.
And Almighty Mercy smiles down from above
And forgives these worldlings precious in His eyes.

NOTICES AND COMMENT

STAFF TRIP. In October Miss Brown and Paul Griffith were entertained in the Burlington, N.C., home of Trustees Emily and Bob Councilman. While there, they had the pleasure of participating in the monthly meeting of the Burlington prayer group, now in its second year. They then visited Advisor Georga Palmer Dishner in Johnson City, Tenn., and had the opportunity of meeting with members of the group recently started there. On their way home they stopped in Hagerstown, Md., to visit with the Reuben Museys and to speak about the Fellowship and show slides of the Holy Land.

NEW CONTRIBUTING EDITORS. We are happy to announce that Marion J. Richardson, of New York City, has accepted our invitation to serve as one of our Contributing Editors. Mrs. Richardson was born in Wisconsin and has spent a busy life as wife and mother of two daughters and actress and world-traveler. In recent years her interests have focussed on poetry, especially the form known as haiku, of which she has published two volumes. Her poetry has appeared in many publications, received many awards. "To best explain my writings," she told us, "I would say that like a fountain or raincloud filling cups and nourishing crops, I am but an earthly spirit through which the breath of the Omnipotent One passes in the stillness of a moment to light a lantern in the darkness."

We are also pleased to announce that Reuben L. Musey, of Hagerstown, Md., becomes a Contributing Editor, while his wife, Rosie, generously assumes his former post as Advisor to the Fellowship in the Southern Zone.

ADDITIONS TO LIBRARY. The Fellowship library is richer for the gift of the following books: *The Quotable American Rabbis*, edited by Samuel M. Silver (Droke House, Publishers, Anderson, S.C. 29621), *A New American Reformation* by James F. Drane, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas* by George C. Papademetriou, and *Kahlil Gibran: Wings of Thought* by Joseph P. Ghougassian (all three published by Philosophical Library, 15 E.40 St., New York, NY 10016)

EDITORIAL (Continued from page 2)

have benefitted in many ways through preplanning together.

When I told our members about your letter, they gave me several messages for you. I will try to interpret them faithfully:

1. While it is necessary to have a rough framework which includes loving fellowship, prayers of thanksgiving, petition, and intercession, sharing of spiritual perceptions, and study of the assigned topic, we think that it is important that we feel free to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, even if we must cut short our book-study as such. Some of our most rewarding experiences have come apparently spontaneously.

2. The use of a particular book has been beneficial in furnishing a specific topic for study. We have moved very slowly in it, going as much in depth as we have found possible by using several supplementary books as well as our own insights. Our basic book so far has been *Dimensions of Prayer* by Douglas Steere.

3. Realizing that the social aspect of our meetings is an important part of our relationship, we have tried to avoid idle chatter and use our whole time together for creative purposes, beginning our sharing time during supper.

4. Our feeling of acceptance and oneness enables indi-

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viduals to feel comfortable in speaking as the Spirit leads or in being silent during sharing and prayer-time. We can even share some completely silent time. However, we are exploring ways of encouraging even more freedom of expression from all.

5. We have emphasized the ways in which our beliefs and practices are similar rather than those in which they are different.

6. In our book-study, we have used a modified Great Books discussion format—basing the discussion on questions which the moderator asks because she honestly is not sure of the answers or does not believe her answers are the only acceptable ones. This avoids any feeling of teacher-pupil relationship. We have found this method rewarding.

Georga, your request for communication with us came at a very opportune time. Some of us have felt the need to evaluate our year together, but I, at least, have been slow about really putting it on paper. You gave me a push when I needed it most, and I am grateful.

If anything we have shared with you proves helpful as you continue to find God's leadership in your learning-to-pray fellowship, we are happy. I am sure your findings would be a great help to us. It is a joy for us to know that you are there and that we are sharing this learning of how to pray. We hope that there will be meaningful communion between us in the future.

We send love to you and all those in your fellowship.

Maud Oaks.

CHERISHED LEGACY

Helen Pisarelli Lombardi

His gift
Came wrapped with life—
Giving air, permanence
Of space, tied with gold streamers from
The sun.

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ANSWER

Emily Sargent Councilman

Out of the blackness of night
A star arose.
Its radiance answered those
Whose eyes were lifted high,
Who chose to seek and follow
Light from the sky.

Out from the world's despair
I will look up to where
God set His beacon shining.
And I will understand
beyond all words,
That Love went willingly to death,
That only love—
Compassion carried to a cross—
Is strong enough to stay
The power of evil,
Fuse the fragments of peace,
And heal the body of humanity
This day.